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UNCLAS ABUJA 000813

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AGREEMENT REACHED ON OIL RIG HOSTAGE
CRISIS

REF: A. ABUJA 810

[B](#). ABUJA 807

[C](#). ABUJA 806

[D](#). ABUJA 768

[1](#)1. National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) local and national leadership on May 3 agreed unconditionally that all 273 hostages and 99 striking workers on board the four Transocean Forex Sedco rigs near Port Harcourt would be allowed to disembark. The Settlement was negotiated by Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) President Adams Oshiomhole, who was the real hero in this crisis. Oshiomhole said the local NUPENG leadership had been in communication with the striking workers on the rig, and they had agreed to comply. Managing Director of Transocean Sedco Forex Ian Clark, who did not participate in the negotiations but was allowed to state his company's position as the session opened, also confirmed to the Ambassador on May 3 that an agreement had been reached and all persons on board the rigs would be offloaded by ship and helicopter over the next few days. Some would disembark this evening, but it would probably be Sunday before all were on land, Clark added.

[1](#)2. In informing the Ambassador about the agreement, Oshiomhole emphasized that the company made no concessions in the negotiations and that in coming days, talks between the company and NUPENG and NLC representatives might occur at a place of the company's choosing. Oshiomhole further stressed that making concessions would have set a bad precedent for industrial relations in the country and insisted that had there been concessions, other workers would seek to use similar tactics in the future. Clark, meanwhile, said that the priority now was to get people off the rigs and that the striking workers would be dealt with next week.

[1](#)3. Clark said that he was enormously appreciative of Embassy efforts in helping to resolve the crisis. In particular, he was grateful for our efforts to involve President Obasanjo as well as NLC President Oshiomhole whose efforts he said were key to resolution of the crisis. Comment: We will continue to monitor the situation over the weekend to ensure that the agreement is actually implemented. End Comment.

[1](#)4. The following is the text of the agreement:

(Begin Text)

COMMUNIQUE OF MEETING BETWEEN THE
MANAGEMENT OF TRANS OCEAN, NUPENG AND
PENGASSAN BROKERED BY THE
NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS ON
2ND OF MAY 2003

Following the intervention of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and under its auspices, the management of Trans Ocean, the national secretariats and local chapter of NUPENG and PENGASSAN met over the ongoing industrial action on some of the operational sites of the company.

It was agreed by all parties that the industrial action be suspended immediately and the rigs be vacated forthwith to pave way for the restoration of normalcy in their operations.

The meeting also agreed that the national leadership of the NLC, NUPENG and PENGASSAN would further assist the parties to immediately evolve a framework of dialogue to deal with the concerns of the management and the workers in a mutually acceptable manner.

Management of Trans Ocean and the unions expressed appreciation for the intervention of the NLC.

Signed:

Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, President, NLC

Ian Clark, Managing Director, Trans Ocean
Peter Akpatason, President, NUPENG
L.B. Ogbeifun, President, Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior
Staff Association (PENGASSAN)
Salvation Akpaphoro, NUPENG, Transocean Branch
Uzomah Samuel, PENGASSAN, Transocean Branch

Witnessed by:
S.A. Ajibola, Federal Ministry of Labor and Employment
Austin Ezenwaka
Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation
(End Text)
JETER